

2001P05313WOUS
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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. - 13. (cancelled).

14. (currently amended) A method of franking and processing ~~parcels~~deliveries, comprising the steps of:

- receiving at a dispatch service a parcel-franking request from a customer relating to an anticipated delivery from the customer to a recipient, said request comprising parcel-delivery data including an address of the recipient of the delivery;

- generating a franking number for said ~~parcel~~delivery in association with said delivery data ~~said franking number being humanly-readable and associated with said delivery data;~~

- storing said franking number and said associated delivery data in a database; and

- assigning a validity time period to said franking number;

- transferring said franking number from the dispatch service to the customer for application by the customer in human readable form to the delivery so that the delivery to be transported by the dispatch service carries said franking number and said recipient address; and

- using said franking number during processing of said delivery to access said delivery data in said database to determine whether a read recipient address on said delivery corresponds to said delivery data associated with said franking number.

15. (currently amended) The method according to claim 14, further comprising the steps of:

- if a corresponding valid entry is determined in said database, further processing said delivery and marking said entry as invalid; and

2001P05313WOUS
Walter Rosenbaum *et al.*

- if no corresponding entry is found in the database, rejecting said delivery

~~-after said parcel has been introduced into a mailstream, reading said franking number and delivery data and locating said franking number and delivery data within said database;~~

~~-initiating handling of said parcel and expiration of said time period if said franking number and delivery data are located; and~~

~~- rejecting said parcel if said franking number and delivery data are not located or said time period is expired.~~

16. (previously presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein said step of receiving further comprises the step of receiving payment means data and further comprising the step of verifying said payment means.

17. (cancelled)

18. (previously presented) The method according to claim 14, wherein said franking number comprising a select number of alphanumeric characters.

19. (previously presented) The method according to claim 18, wherein an initial alphanumeric character is a franking symbol.

20. (cancelled)

21. (currently amended) The method according to claim 14, further comprising the step of applying a machine readable code to said ~~parcel~~delivery if said franking number and delivery data are located within said database.

22. (currently amended) The method according to claim ~~17~~14, further comprising the step of validating said ~~delivery~~address of said recipient of the delivery.

23. (currently amended) The method according to claim 22, wherein said step of validating further comprises the steps of:

2001P05313WOUS
Walter Rosenbaum et al.

- consulting an address for forwarding database;
- finding a match between said ~~delivery~~ address of said recipient of the delivery and said address for forwarding; and
- if a match is found, substituting a forwarding address for said ~~delivery~~ address of said recipient.

24. (currently amended) The method according to claim 25, further comprising the step of informing ~~a sender of said parcel~~ said customer of said forwarding address if a match is found.

25. (currently amended) ~~the~~ The method according to claim 22, wherein said step of validating further comprises the steps of:

- determining if said ~~destination~~ address of said recipient is formatted for optical character recognition; and
- informing ~~a parcel sender~~ said customer if said ~~destination~~ address of said recipient is not formatted for optical character recognition and how said address could be formatted for optical character recognition.

26. (previously presented) The method according to claim 14, further comprising the step of recording franking costs.

27. (currently amended) The method according to claim 14, further comprising the step of tracking said ~~parcel~~ delivery through said mail stream via said franking number.

28. (currently amended) The method according to claim 15, further comprising the step of tracking said ~~parcel~~ delivery through said mail stream via said franking number.

29. (currently amended) The method according to claim 27, further comprising the steps of:

- determining a cost for said ~~parcel~~ delivery based at least upon said ~~parcels~~ delivery's travel through said mail stream; and

2001P05313WOUS
Walter Rosenbaum *et al.*

- charging said cost to ~~a sender of said parcel~~ said customer.

30. (currently amended) The method according to claim 29, wherein said step of determining a cost further comprises the step of determining a cost based upon at least one of weight, size and class of service of said ~~parcel~~ delivery.

31. (withdrawn) A method of franking and posting a parcel comprising the steps of:

- generating a franking request, said franking request comprising parcel delivery data;
- receiving a franking number, said franking number being humanly readable, associated with said delivery data, and stored in a database for a limited validity time;
- printing said franking number on an address face of said parcel; and
- delivering said parcel to a mailstream entry point.

32. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 31, wherein said step of delivering is made such that after delivery, delivery data is scanned and said limited validity time is expired.

33. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 31, further comprising the step of printing identifying characters on said address face, said characters identifying said parcel as electronic post.

34. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 31, wherein said franking number comprises a plurality of alpha numeric characters.

35. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 34, wherein a first of said alphanumeric characters is a franking symbol.

36. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 31, further comprising the step of transmitting said franking request to a franking provider.

2001P05313WOUS
Walter Rosenbaum *et al.*

37. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 36, wherein said transmitting is performed over the Internet.

38. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 36, wherein said franking number is received via the Internet.

39. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 36, wherein said parcel delivery data comprises a destination address.

40. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 31, further comprising the step of receiving addressor information confirmation from said franking provider.

41. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 31, further comprising the step of receiving addressor information formatting confirmation.